

The Conception of Women's Identity and Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood's Novels: A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract—This article aims at revealing the women's identity and subjectivity being represented in Margaret Atwood's selected novels. This study employed the qualitative descriptive method. Data were collected from four of Atwood's novels: *The Edible Woman* (1969), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985, 2017), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), and *The Testaments* (2019). The analysis was conducted using the feminist literary criticism, particularly gynocriticism. The research result indicates that, by considering several factors such as Atwood's background as the Canadian writer who emphasizes the themes of the victimization and survival and her position as the realist writer, Atwood constructs the women's identity and subjectivity based on the women's personalities shaped by the concrete social realities. From the perspective of the feminist thought, Atwood's novels portray the female's characters through various paradigms, particularly those associated with the second-wave and third-wave feminisms. In the context of the second-wave feminism, Atwood emphasizes the women's effort to discover the "true" identity and subjectivity. Meanwhile, from the third-wave feminist perspective, she depicts the women's identity and subjectivity in terms of the social discourse formation.

Index Terms—feminism, gynocriticism, women's identity, subjectivity, Margaret Atwood

I. INTRODUCTION

In the interview with Margaret Kaminski, as cited by Tolan (2004), Margaret Atwood argued "*I don't consider it feminism; I just consider it social realism.*" This statement indicates Atwood's resistance to the public tendency to label her works strictly as the feminist. Atwood is widely recognized as the prolific Canadian novelist and poet who has produced more than twenty works across various genres, including the poetry, fiction, nonfiction, children's literature, and short stories. Despite her refusal to be categorized solely as the feminist writer, her works are consistently discussed within the feminist frameworks. Numerous scholars classify Atwood as the feminist writer, although they arrive at differing conclusions, positioning her works either within the second-wave or third-wave feminism. Atwood is often associated with the second-wave feminism because her first novel was published during the rise of the second-wave feminism movement (Macpherson, 2010, p. 111). Furthermore, her works address the concerns and themes being central to the second-wave feminism, particularly the emphasis on the rediscovery of "womanity" that has been consciously or unconsciously repressed by the male hegemony or patriarchal system (Tolan, 2004; Weedon, 1993, pp. 20-23).

At the same time, Atwood's works are also interpreted as the representation of the third-wave feminism. Her novels encompass a wide range of genres, including the dystopia, realism, experimentalism, and detective fiction (Snaith, 2017). The thematic scope of her works extends from the politics and environmental issues to the gender and socio-cultural concerns. This diversity of the genres and themes contributes to the portrayal of the female protagonists as the subjects with the complex, diverse, and non-unified identities, which aligns with the central concerns of the third-wave feminism (Wallace, 2009; Obidić, 2017). Moreover, through the studies on Atwood's novels, *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle*, Waugh (2012, p. 169) argues that while Atwood is not typically regarded as the postmodernist or third-wave feminist writer, her works reveal the fictional structures that are only superficially modified by the realist conventions and the liberal ethos, allowing the deeper ideological tensions to the surface. The third-wave feminism, in general, challenges the stable and essentialist conceptions of the femininity and "womanity," emphasizing their instability and fluidity (Barker, 2012, p. 169; Eagleton, 1996).

Referring to Tolan's conclusion that Atwood's works represent the second-wave feminism and Wallace's contrasting view that they reflect the third-wave feminism, it can be assumed that these differing interpretations are not mutually exclusive, rather than positioning one interpretation as correct and the other as flawed. These perspectives reflect the distinct critical paradigms and methodological approaches to Atwood's oeuvre. Such divergent conclusions may be synthesized as the reflection of the development of Atwood's perspectives both as the woman and the writer in response to the evolution of the feminist movement. From the second-wave to the third-wave feminism movements, Atwood's career as the writer, activist, and cultural figure spans more than four decades, the period during which the feminist theories and movements have undergone the significant transformations (Howell, 2006).

The development of the feminist movements and theories has inevitably influenced Atwood's intellectual and creative activities, both directly or indirectly. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that Atwood's literary works engage dialectically with various feminist discourses, particularly those associated with the second-wave and third-wave feminisms. This dialectical engagement shapes Atwood's consciousness and influences her understanding of the reality, especially regarding the women's identity and subjectivity as represented in her novels. This article examines Atwood's conception of the womanhood through four selected novels: *The Edible Woman* (1969), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985, 2017), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), and *The Testaments* (2019). By analyzing the female characters in these works, this study seeks to contribute to the deeper understanding of Atwood's position within the feminist discourse, particularly in relation to the evolving concepts of the women's identity and subjectivity.

II. LITERARY REVIEW

In the feminist discourse, the identity and subjectivity are crucial issues in uncovering the "true" identity of women or in questioning whether the stable foundation exists for them to exist as the autonomous selves. Weedon (as cited in Eagleton, 2003, p. 112) defines the subjectivity within the feminist theory as encompassing the conscious thoughts, feelings, the sense of self, and the unconscious meanings, wishes and desires shaping the identity.

The terms 'subject' and 'subjectivity' are fiercely contested within the feminist philosophy, as well as the social and cultural theory. The feminist debates on the subjectivity have long revolved around whether the femaleness and femininity possess the essential, unchanging characteristics grounded in the female body, psyche or experience or whether they are historically and socially specific (Weedon; as cited in Eagleton, 2003, p. 112). The problem of the women's identity raises the fundamental question is: what we call as the women's identity is truly constructed independently by the women themselves? In fact, the feminist theory argues that the women's identity is constructed within the unequal power relations, in which the women are positioned as inferior in relation to the men, who are constructed as superior.

Early modern feminism is closely associated with the liberal women's movement, which emphasized the individual as the free, rational and autonomous person (Gerson, 2002). Through the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, the women were positioned within the modern project as the free and rational subjects. Wollstonecraft argued that the humanity being understood as the rational beings shaped by the social construction as proposed by the modern philosophers such as Descartes and John Locke, had to necessarily include the women and treat them equally (Donovan, 2000, pp. 20-21). The subjectivity in the eighteenth-century assumed that the women could achieve their true identity through the free development of rationality (Weedon; as cited in Eagleton, 2003, p. 128). The second-wave feminism emerged from the women's disappointment with their social roles; despite gaining access to the political and social aspects of the public sphere, the women continued to occupy the subordinate position. In relation to the second-wave feminist agenda on the subjectivity, Weedon (Eagleton, 2003, p. 111) explains this clearly through the well-known feminist slogan:

The feminist rallying cry "the personal is political," encouraged women to examine how their subjectivity had been shaped by the patriarchal relations which determined their aspiration, self-worth, the sexual division of labor and patriarchal gender roles.

In contrast to the second-wave feminism, the feminist poststructuralism assumes that the sex and gender, as well as the women's identity and subjectivity are socially and culturally constructed rather than biologically determined. Because they are socially constructed, the claims of the universality, stability, and foundational femininity or "womanity" are inherently unstable (Barker, 2012, p. 292). The concepts such as the women, feminism, history and collectivity are understood as the discursive constructions that are unstable and only temporarily stabilized through the social practice (Barker, 2012, p. 229).

The post structuralist thought has significantly influenced the feminist theory, leading to the rejection of the idea of the stable, unified, and autonomous female subjects. Some feminists have developed the new theoretical frameworks based on the linguistic paradigms. Judith Butler, for instance, develops her concept of the women's identity and subjectivity through the notion of performativity (Weiss, 2023; Weedon, 2004, p. 6). Further comments on Judith Butler's concept argue that the identities are often internalized by the individuals through the repeated performance in everyday life. Butler (1990, p. 13), focusing on the gender, argues that "there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; rather, the gender is the cultural interpretation of sex, while the sex itself is already the gendered category".

III. METHOD

The data were collected and analyzed using the feminist criticism, particularly the gynocriticism strategy, encompassing the biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural models, which examined the female construction, communication, psyche, and societal conditioning (Bressel, 1994, p. 106). Showalter (1985, p. 131) argues that:

The feminist research in the history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology developed the hypotheses of the female subculture including not only the ascribed status and the internalized construction of the femininity, but also the occupation, interaction and consciousness of the women.

In applying the gynocritical analysis, this research followed these subsequent steps: First, the intrinsic analysis was conducted by focusing on the elements or structures of Atwood's novels independently, with the specific emphasis on the women's identity and subjectivity. Second, the extrinsic analysis examined the writer, Margaret Atwood, as the social being who both influenced and was influenced by the cultural, political, social and feminist values. This stage focused on Atwood's biography and social-historical context in shaping her literary style, genre, and perspective on the women's identity and subjectivity. Third, the dialectical reading was undertaken between the results of the intrinsic and extrinsic analyses. This synthesis aimed to identify the author's vision and worldview as represented in her novels, as well as her position as the writer within the broader evolution of the feminist movement.

IV. THE RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Female Characters in Atwood's Novels

The following table summarizes the identity and subjectivity of the women's characters in Atwood's selected novels such as *The Edible Woman*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Blind Assassin*, and *The Testaments*.

TABLE 1
THE IDENTITY AND SUBJECTIVITY OF THE WOMEN'S CHARACTER

1. <i>The Edible Woman (TEW)</i>		
The Characters	Marian MacAlpine	
Marian	Being inferior (p. 13), as well as the dependent and passive woman (pp. 71, 81) who is unable to make her own decision, under Peter's hegemony (p. 94). She adheres the traditional conception of the marriage and gender roles (pp. 37-29, 159).	Marian's anorexia (p. 225) and "hallucination moment" (p. 154) are symbolized as the alternative form of consciousness through which she discovers the freedom and independent female identity. The act of eating the cake serves as the climactic moment in which she reclaims her subjectivity as the woman (p. 300). Furthermore, her friend Ainsley's unconventional opinion on the marriage contribute to Marian's evolving awareness of herself as both the woman and self-aware subject (p. 79).
2. <i>The Handmaid's Tale (THT)</i>		
The Characters	Before being captured by the Gilead regime, Offred lived as the working mother and independent woman with the full autonomy. During her time as the Handmaid, Offred loses her original identity and subjectivity, as she is reduced to the mere reproductive object.	
Offred	Before the Gilead Regime seized the power, Offred was the working woman with the husband and the daughter, characterized as the independent and free individual. The previous regime maintained the equal social system between the women and men (p. 286). Offred lost her identity and subjectivity upon becoming the Handmaid, in which she is reduced to the mere reproductive tool (pp. 6-8, 73-74, 84, 295).	By remembering Luke (p. 200) and her daughter (p. 84), Offred maintains her sense of self, desire, emotion, and capacity for love as the human being (pp. 97, 262). She copes with her situation by reclaiming her womanhood (p. 80) and engaging in affairs with both the Commander and Nick. Significantly, her affair with Nick is based on her own decision, allowing her to assert the control over her body, desire and consciousness (pp. 268-269, 271).
3. <i>The Blind Assassin (TBA)</i>		
The characters	- As Iris' sister, Laura is portrayed as the "rebel" whose character contrasts sharply with the Iris' passivity. Laura is represented as the modern woman with the strong conviction, the stubborn nature and fierce desire for the independence. - Iris Richard Griffin, as the protagonist of the novel, she is depicted in the earlier chapters as the passive and dependent woman, unable to make the autonomous decision under her husband's domination. However, she gradually transforms into the independent and active subject who successfully resists her husband's hegemony through the act of writing the writing, which allows her to reclaim her own narrative.	
Iris Richard Griffin	Under Richard's domination, Iris becomes mentally powerless and oppressed (pp. 233, 323), turning into the submissive wife with no personal desire and obedient wife (pp. 296, 458) displaying no personal desire as the woman whose opinions are valued and who possesses the space to actualize her potential as the woman and human being (pp. 293, 457).	Richard's sexual abuse of her sister, Laura, prompts Iris to leave his house and begin orchestrating the revenge strategy against him. By authoring the novel <i>The Blind Assassin</i> , Iris intellectually succeeds in taking the revenge and escaping Richard's hegemony (p. 486). Furthermore, her affair with Alex Thomas serves as the definitive moment of independence for Iris; it represents her ability to make the autonomous decision and to exercise the control over her body freely and consciously.
4. <i>The Testaments (TT)</i>		
The Characters	- Agnes Jemima, woman who was born and raised in Gilead country. She experiences the internal conflict between her inner doubt and the doctrine in Gilead. Agnes initially delineates her childhood life in Gilead as similar to that of children elsewhere, as she is not yet fully aware of Gilead's oppressive culture. However, as she matures, Agnes is portrayed as the woman who develops the critical consciousness towards the regime. - Baby Nicole, also known as Daisy, is the young girl who was smuggled out of Gilead by her mother, the handmaid and raised by the members of the resistance organization Mayday. She is depicted as the critical female figure who dedicates herself to exposing and overthrowing the Gilead regime.	

	- Aunt Lydia was a successful woman who worked as the judge before Gilead regime took the power. In Gilead, she was portrayed as an authoritative and powerful woman being responsible for enforcing Gilead's doctrine upon the women, particularly the handmaids, including supervising ritualized sexual practices between the Commander and Handmaids.
Agnes Jemima	- Agnes Jemima initially perceives her childhood in Gilead as similar to that of the children elsewhere, as she has not yet developed the awareness of the regime's ideological and cultural systems (pp. 9, 20-21). - Although she possesses the latent capacity for the critical awareness regarding the Gilead system (p. 21), the state's delusive doctrine concerning the "true" identity as the woman (p. 105) renders her passive and obedient conditions. This indoctrination leads her to accept the Gilead scenario, including her arranged marriage to the Commander (pp. 85, 90, 94-95, 225). - Agnes's experience of the sexual abuse significantly enhances her awareness of the man and patriarchal power. Her anger, frustration and disgust toward this abusive experience reshape her consciousness by changing her perception of the reality, particularly within Gilead (p. 240). - Agnes strives to assert her authentic self, harboring the desire to be the woman who rejects being the subject dictated by Gilead's values. She aspires to become the woman who is capable of making independent decision about her own life (pp. 289, 297, 303). - Choosing to become an "Aunt" serves as Agnes's strategy to escape from the system, while also brings her to the pivotal moment, when she discovers the true nature of Gilead regime. The discovery of Gilead's criminal practices provides Agnes with the agency to resist and act against the regime (p. 307).
Baby Nicole or Daisy	- Baby Nicole's character is portrayed as the critically-minded young woman (pp. 45-46) - Having grown up within the Mayday movement-an organization committed to opposing the Gilead regime, she develops the critical consciousness and the deep-seated opposition to Gilead's oppressive system (pp. 133, 197). She becomes more aware and decides to intensify her struggle to destroy the Gilead regime when she is smuggled back into the country and witnesses firsthand how the regime systematically exploits the women.
Aunt Lydia	Aunt Lydia's identity and subjectivity cannot be understood simply in terms of the linear development. Instead, she embodies the double or split identity throughout the novel. On the one hand, she performs the role of "Aunt Lydia," the authoritative and seemingly powerful woman who enforces Gilead's doctrines, particularly upon the Handmaids, and supervises the ritualized sexual practices between Commanders and Handmaids. However, Aunt Lydia is depicted with two distinct personalities. While she appears to be the key figure being responsible for the system that brutally exploits the women, she is also portrayed as the intelligent and rational woman who secretly orchestrates the strategies to subvert and destroy the Gilead regime, the system that stripped her of her freedom as the successful woman in the previous regime (pp. 62, 115, 317).

B. Atwood as a Writer, a Woman and a Canadian

An Analysis of Margaret Atwood's context can assist in discovering the correlation between her view and the vision within her works not only in terms of her identity as the female writer but also as the Canadian writer. During her studies at Radcliffe College, she encountered the reality that the existence of Canadian literature was largely invisible under the hegemony of the American and British literature. Consequently, her book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Atwood, 2012) represented her effort to contribute to the establishment of what is recognized as the "Canadian Literature". Atwood (2012, pp. 54-58) formulates those Canadian literatures being characterized by the themes of the survival (stemming from Canadians' efforts to engage with the wild and extreme nature) and victimization (as the country with the colonial history and mentality). Meanwhile, she also concretely deals with the dilemmatic situation; she faces the dual marginalization, not only due to her status within the "inferior" national class but also the woman writer confronting the gendered social constructions (Bouson, 2013, p. 7). Atwood herself asserts her dual position in the literary world as the Canadian writer and the feminist, stating:

I see the two issues as similar. In fact, I see feminism as the part of the larger issue: human dignity. That's what Canadian nationalism is about, what feminism is about, and what black power is about. They're all part of the same vision. (Tolan, 2007, p. 7)

Her works mostly depict the women's lives through their roles as the protagonists, however she unrestricted her writing solely to the feminism or gender issues (Atwood, 2022, p. 335). Her concerns extend to the social, political, and environmental issues, such as the global warming. As Atwood argues, "*I have always seen Canadian nationalism and the concern for the women's rights as the part of the larger, non-exclusive picture*" (Howell, 2006, p. 22). Consequently, she both criticizes the broader social problems including the politics, environment crisis, economic shift, capitalism, and describes the women's struggles to reclaim their rights within these complex systems.

C. The Dialectical Reading of Atwood and Her Novels

Understanding Atwood's vision, as represented in the selected novels such as *The Edible Woman*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Blind Assassin* and *The Testaments*, requires the approach through her specific literary paradigm. This involves examining her understanding of the relationship between the literary works and social reality, her self-positioning as the female writer within the feminist discourse, and her role within the Canadian literary tradition. Atwood's literary vision is not restricted to the feminism or feminist theory, rather she is deeply concerned with the broader human problems across various domains. This perspective characterizes her as the realist writer who frames the universal human issues through the lens of the woman's experiences. In short, Atwood addresses the global concerns by situating them within the experienced realities of the women's lives.

Atwood recognizes the intellectual contestation between the modernist and postmodernist thoughts, particularly concerning the women's conception. Thus, she portrays the female characters with the diverse personalities, refusing to be restricted to the single model of the "ideal woman.". In addition to creating the varied characters, Atwood employs

the multiple genres and narrative techniques. She remains deeply concerned with the human problems across all life aspects, political, economic, and environmental parts. As Atwood said "*I live in the society; I also put the society inside my books, so that you get a box within a box effect.*" Accordingly, in the interview of Margaret Atwood with Margaret Kaminski, as cited in Tolan (2004), Atwood asserts, "*I don't consider it feminism; I just consider it social realism.*" This claim reinforces her rejection of being categorized strictly as the feminist writer. She realizes that accepting such the label could restrict her work to the narrow classification, as Eagleton argues (as cited in Abbas, 2001) that if the women writers focus on the women's lives, they risk being labeled as "partial", "narrow", or as producing merely "women's books".

Therefore, Atwood's identification as the realist rather than the feminist offers her greater freedom to create the works which address the human problems in general. From the readers' perspective, this positioning allows Atwood's works to be acknowledged and appreciated as the literature without the restrictive label. Consequently, Atwood contextualizes the women's issues in the proportion to the broader human concerns, as she states "*I see feminism as the part of the larger issue: human dignity.*" Nevertheless, her deep commitment to the women's issues remains the evident in the fact that the protagonists of her novels are predominantly women.

Based on the analysis of the identity and subjectivity in Atwood's selected novels, *The Edible Woman*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Blind Assassin*, and *The Testaments*, the key female characters include Marian McAlpin and Ainsley (*The Edible Woman*); Offred (*The Handmaid's Tale*), Iris Chase Griffin, Laura Chase Griffin and Winifred (*The Blind Assassin*), Baby Nicole, Agnes Jemima, and Aunt Lydia (*The Testaments*). Marian McAlpin, as the protagonist of *The Edible Woman*, experiences the identity crisis marked by the profound pessimism sense. This outlook arises from her awareness that her career advancement is stifled by the male domination in the workplace. As Tong (as cited in Hall, 2004, p. 42) argues, the female subordination is rooted in a set of the customary and legal constraints that block the women's access to, and success in the public sphere. Marian's conception of the womanhood is initially grounded in the traditional paradigm, specifically, her belief that the motherhood must be preceded by the marriage. Conversely, her roommate, Ainsley, challenges this notion by rejecting the marriage and asserting that the motherhood can exist independently of it. Furthermore, Marian is depicted as the woman who consistently views herself through the male perception. She struggles to make the autonomous decision, living under the patriarchy that subsumes her identity within Peter's shadows, ideals and expectations. However, Marian's awareness evolves as she attains the subjectivity through the unconscious denial of her body and the eventual annulment of her engagement.

The Edible Woman was published during the rise of the second-wave feminism, centering on the gendered subjectivity amidst the broader feminist struggle against the patriarchal exploitation, sexual double standards, and for the equal rights, as noted by Eagleton (2003). Marian's character embodies the fight against the male hegemony in both the domestic and public spheres. Her resistance to the male domination is symbolized through the anorexia, the cancellation of her engagement, and the act of consuming the cake she bakes. The anorexia symbolizes the rejection of the male gaze and patriarchal construction of the female body, while consuming the cake affirms her reclaiming of the subjectivity.

The Handmaid's Tale not only depicts the systematic alteration of the women's identity and subjectivity but also exposes the overwhelming power of the male dominated regime operation through the militarism, religious doctrine, and patriarchy. Offred, the protagonist, represents the women's victimization having once lived as the autonomous individuals with the social and political freedom being transformed into the mere object under the Gilead regime. Offred resists this imposed identity by consciously reclaiming her past as the self-aware subject and maintaining the psychological distance between her consciousness and her commodified body.

Howells (as cited in Bouson, 2013, p. 60) drawing on Cixous's seminal essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," argues that Offred positions her body and voice against the patriarchal domination. Through this dystopian narrative, Atwood not only warns the readers about the potential socio-political condition, particularly the women's oppression under the authoritarian patriarchy, but also critiques the incomplete project of the gender equality, especially the persistence of the male dominance. This critique is reflected in Aunt Lydia's statement: "Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it." This manipulation suggests that the women's supposed protection merely masks the systemic exploitation. Offred's internal dialectic between the survival, resistance, and submission culminates in her decision to assert the subjectivity despite the risks, even as she is ultimately taken into the custody.

In *The Blind Assassin*, Iris Chase Griffin represents the traditional upper-class woman, characterized by the passivity and pessimism, and socially conditioned to be the wife, mother, and domestic supporter. Atwood (2022, p. 335), in her essay "Am I a Bad Feminist?", highlights the historical restrictions on the women's rights, including the property ownership, financial independence, education, reproductive control. Iris' marriage to Richard reflects the survival through the economic necessity, while the victimization is palpable in Iris' systematic oppression and Laura's sexual abuse. Iris' transformation occurs through the act of writing, which becomes her primary means of the resistance and self-awareness. By crafting her narrative, Iris exposes Richard's crimes and reclaims autonomy over her own history. Cixous (as cited in Gay, 2025, p. 207) asserts, the women must "write themselves" to create the transformative ruptures in history. Through this literary act, Iris overcomes the fear and oppression, ultimately achieving identity and autonomy

(Arora et al., 2017). Atwood (2012, p. 30) further explains that the survival evolves from mere the physical endurance to the spiritual survival, in which the liberation from fear becomes the ultimate goal.

A preoccupation with one's survival is necessarily also the preoccupation with the obstacles to that survival. In earlier writers, these obstacles are external—the land, the climate, and so forth. In the later writers, the obstacles tend to become both harder to identify and more internal; they are no longer obstacles to the physical survival but obstacles to what we may call the spiritual survival, to life as anything more than the minimally human being. Sometimes, the fear of these obstacles becomes itself the obstacle, and the character is paralyzed by terror. . . It may even be life itself that he fears; and when life becomes the threat to life, you have the moderately vicious circle.

Atwood's latest novel, *The Testaments* experiments, with the post-feminist, the conceptions of the identity and subjectivity through three protagonists: Baby Nicole, Agnes Jemima, and Aunt Lydia. Agnes Jemima, raised within the Gilead system, becomes critically aware of its oppression and resists her assigned identity by choosing to become the aunt rather than the wife. Aunt Lydia represents the dual, fragmented identity: publicly enforcing Gilead's regime while secretly orchestrating its downfall. From the post-structuralist feminist perspective, Aunt Lydia embodies the discursive and performative identity (Weiss, 2023), illustrating that the identity is unstable and temporarily the fixed through the social practice (Barker, 2012, p. 229). Similarly, Waugh (1989, p. 169) argues that the feminine subject is often fragmented and dispersed. Aunt Lydia performs the imposed identity while internally resisting it, exemplifying Hall's (2004, p. 101) concept that the subject though constructed by the discourse, retain the capacity for the reflection and resistance.

Ultimately, Atwood's strategic use of the diverse genres, combined with her Canadian paradigm of the survival and victimization, uniquely shapes her depiction of the woman's identity and subjectivity. Although she consistently rejects the feminist label, her works over five decades demonstrate the profound engagement with the women's lives. This reveals the dialectical relationship with the feminist theory spanning from the second-wave feminism to the post-feminist thought, while remaining firmly aligned with her broader concern for the human dignity and humanity.

V. CONCLUSION

By considering Atwood's novels intrinsically, alongside her biography and context as the writer, it can be concluded that her worldview regarding the women's identity and subjectivity is grounded in the universal vision of humanity. Although she recognizes that the women's struggles are the part of the broader human issues, Atwood consistently prioritizes these concerns by featuring the female protagonists in almost all of her works. Her vision of the women's identity and subjectivity is also intrinsically linked to her project of formulating the Canadian literary identity. One of her non-fictions works, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, serves as the manifesto of her writing style and her claim regarding the Canadian identity. In this work, Atwood constructs the Canadian literary identity as being fundamentally concerned with the themes of the victimization and survival. Consequently, Atwood's selected novels, *The Edible Woman*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Blind Assassin*, and *The Testaments* represent the women as the protagonists who survive and struggle against the male hegemony across the cultural and political domains. Through these struggles, the women develop their own understanding of their bodies, language, and the world. As the realist writer, Atwood's vision of the women is not confined to any single feminist doctrine. She understands the women's problems based on their lived realities and situational contexts, exploring the pathways for the women's resistance against their disadvantaged positions as the oppressed class under the male hegemony. From the feminist theoretical perspective, it can be concluded that Atwood draws upon both the second-wave and third-wave feminist conceptions in constructing the women's identity and subjectivity.

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